
Resonances and Reservations Between Christianity and Positive Psychology

Dr Peggy Kern

Centre for Positive Psychology
The University of Melbourne

Dr Susan Benecchi

Planetary Science Institute
USA



@pkern001

Write Conference 2016
09 July 2016

“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

~ Aristotle

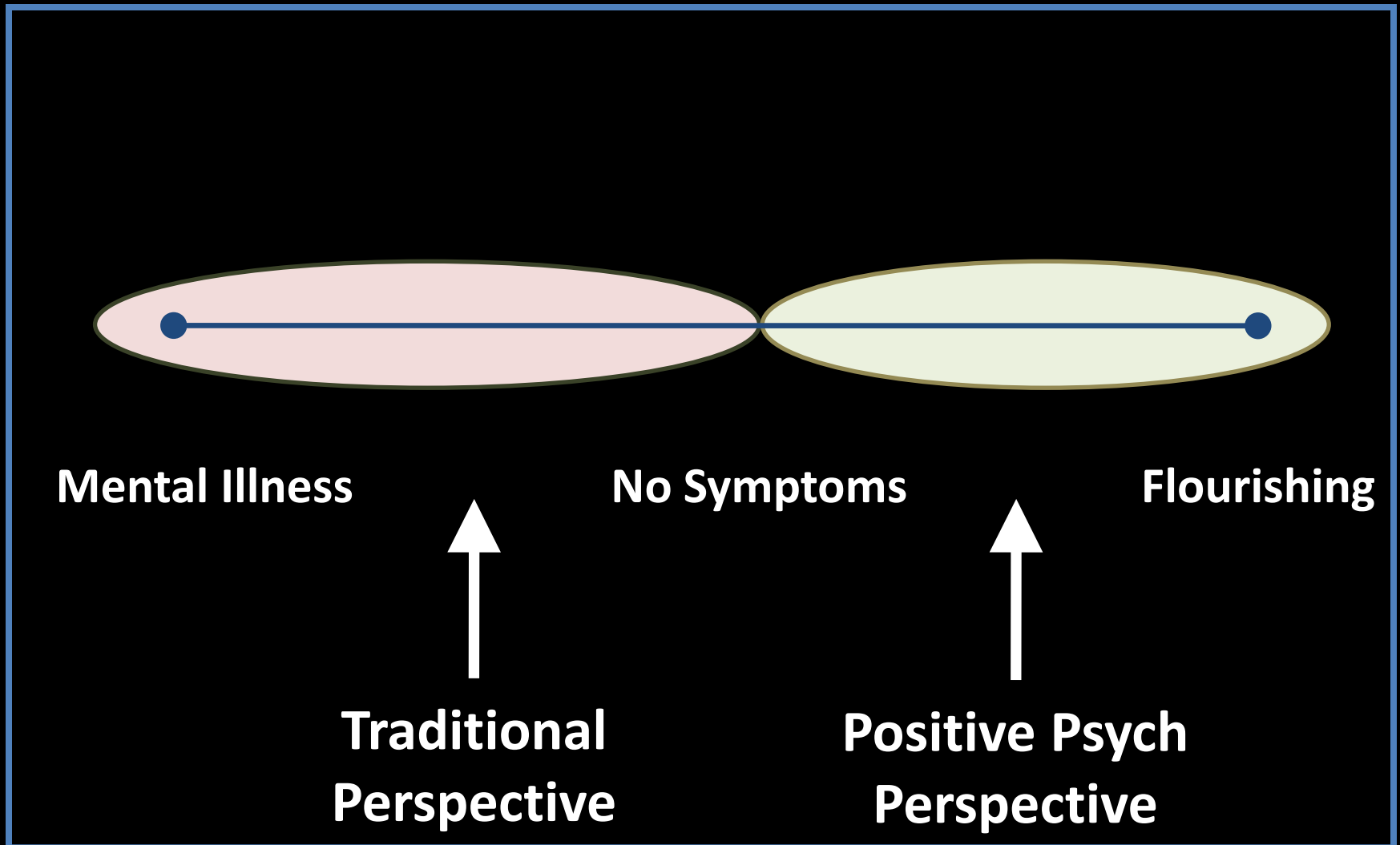
What is happiness?



Positive Psychology

The scientific study of optimal functioning that aims to discover and promote internal and external factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive

The Positive Psychology Perspective





Psychology & Christianity



Christian Psychology

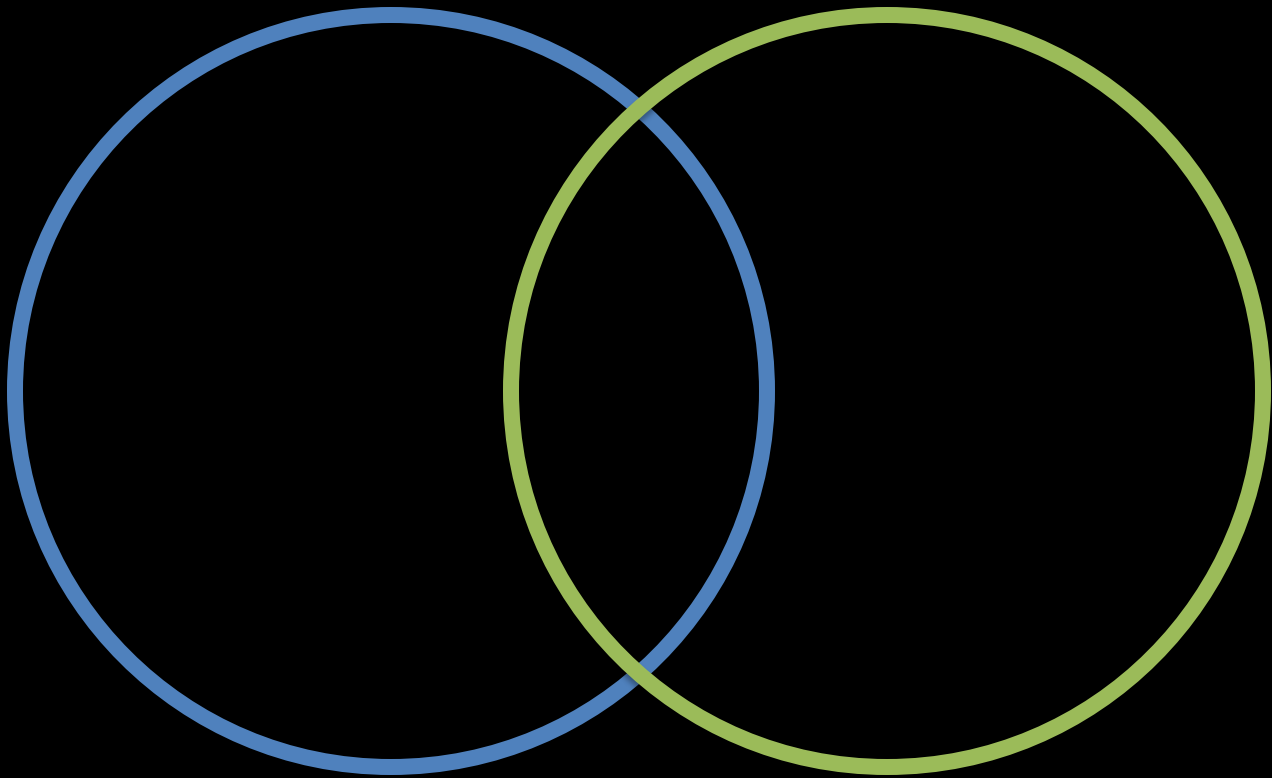




Jingle-Jangle

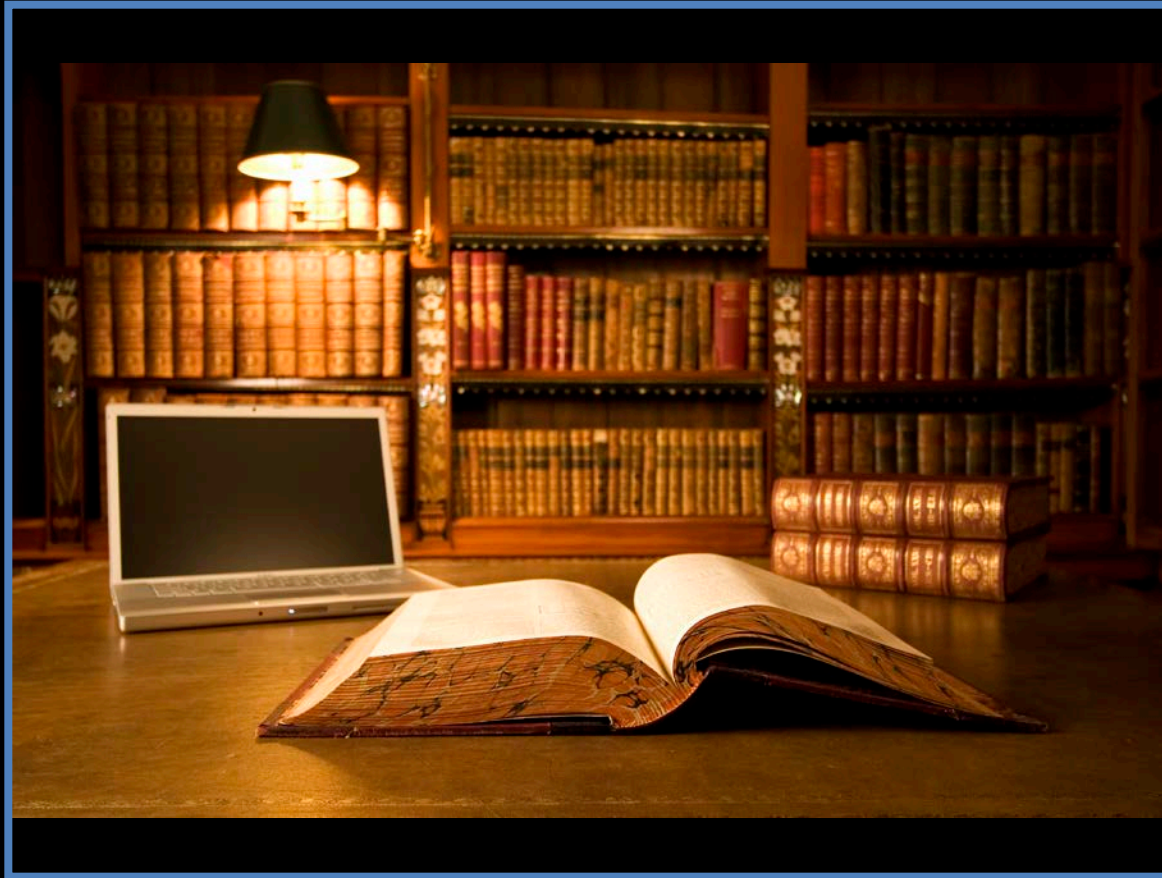


Jingle-Jangle



The Current Study





Lexical Analysis

Example Concepts

Gratitude

Spirituality

Happiness

Love

Wisdom

Humanity

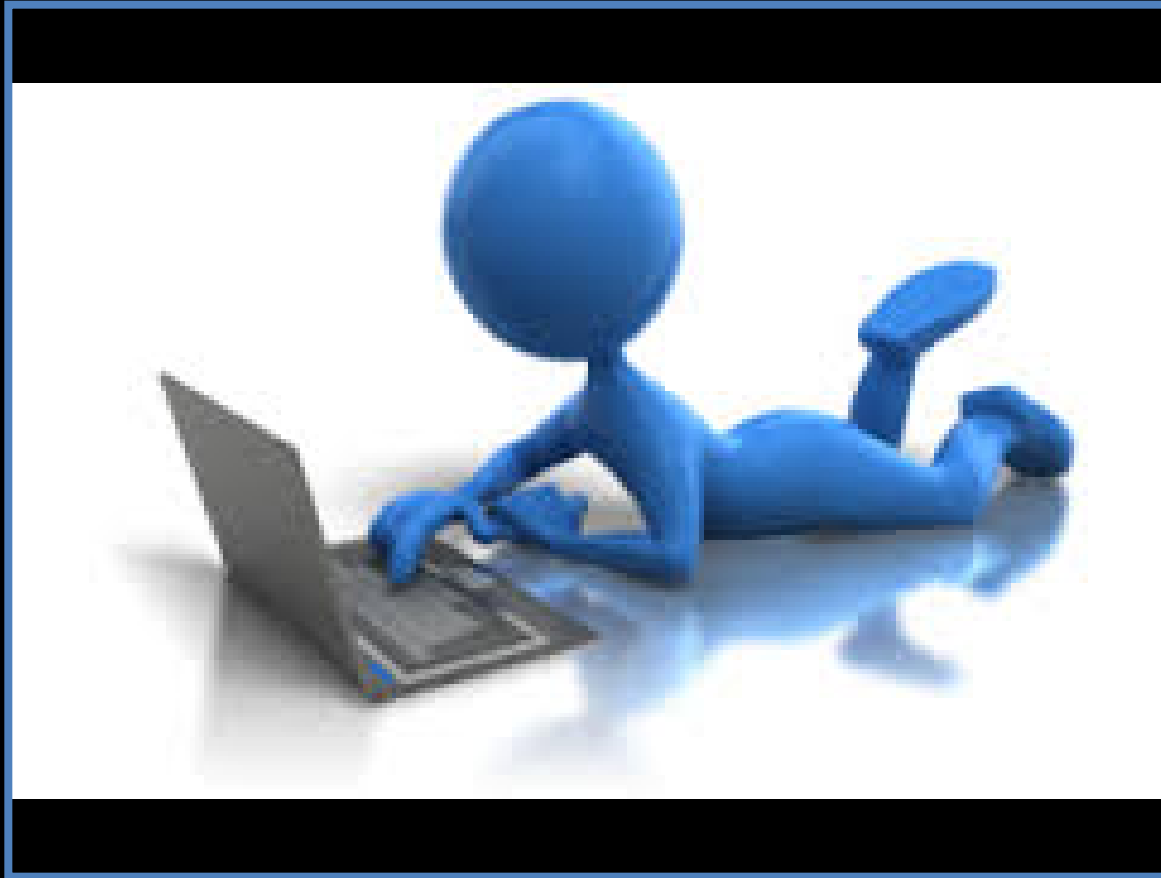
Meaning/
Purpose

Perseverance

Hope

Self-control

Pain



Survey of Positive Psychologists & Christians

- “Below are a series of concepts and terms that are studied and applied within positive psychology...
 - ... Which ones do you think are core things that we study and/or use in positive psychology?”
 - ... Which ones are important from a Biblical perspective?”

Top Terms: Positive Psychology

Term/ Concept	PP	Bible
Meaning/ purpose	95.45	58.33
Strengths	90.91	41.67
Satisfaction with life	86.36	37.50
Well-being	86.36	33.33
Flourishing	81.82	37.50
Grit	81.82	16.67
Optimism	81.82	16.67
Gratitude	77.27	83.33
Virtue, excellence	77.27	62.50
Mindfulness	77.27	37.50

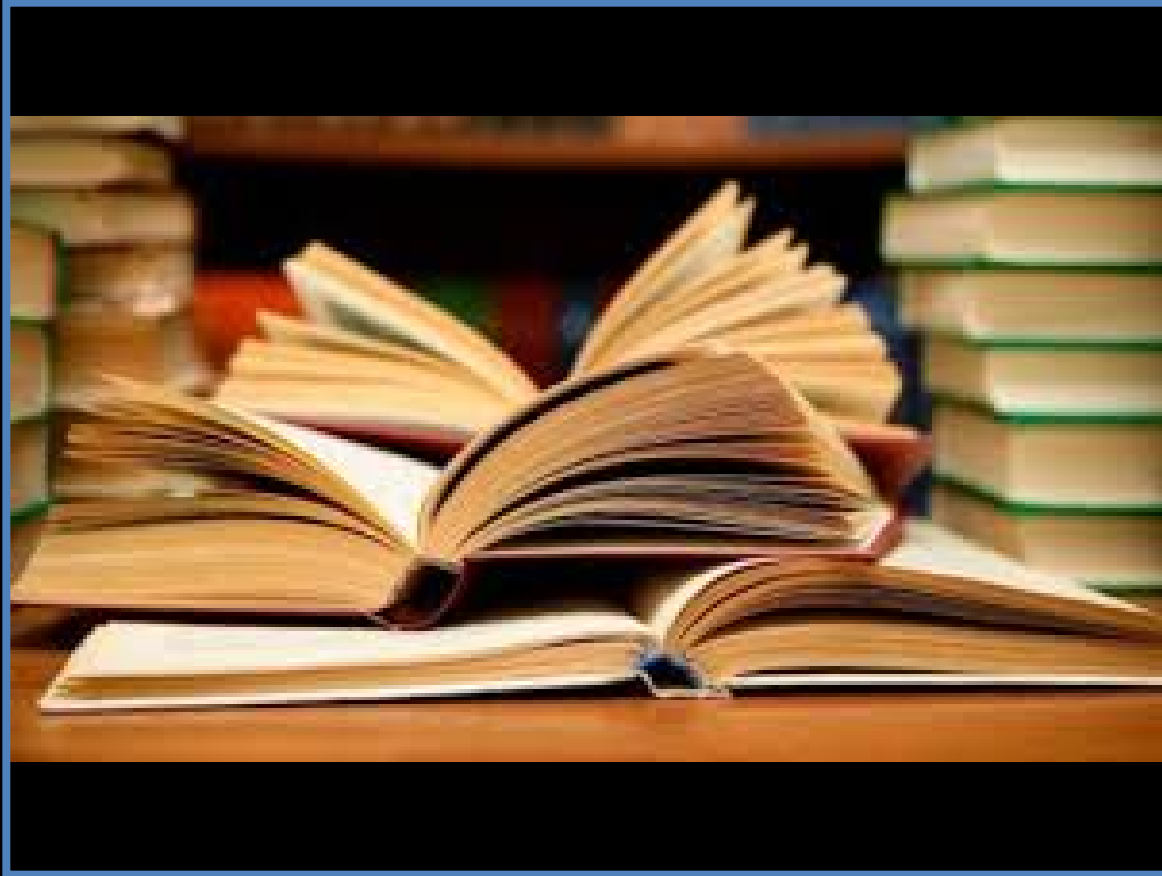
Top Terms: The Bible

Term/ Concept	PP	Bible
Forgiveness	40.91	95.83
Grace	18.18	95.83
Humility	36.36	91.67
Faith	22.73	91.67
Prayer	4.55	91.67
Love	59.09	87.50
Thankfulness	54.55	87.50
Self-discipline	50.00	87.50
Wisdom	45.45	87.50
Joy	36.36	87.50

What are the three most important concepts, terms, or areas in [positive psychology/ the Bible]?

Top Concepts

Positive Psychology	The Bible
character strengths well-being/ flourishing resilience meaning/ purpose in life positive relationships positive emotion research and evidenced-based Optimism and hope Mindfulness	forgiveness/ mercy grace, love (for one another, for God, and God's love for humankind) hope relationship with God faith



A Review of Existing Literature

Happiness



Theological Perspectives



The Importance of Telos



The Role of Suffering



The Flourishing Life



www.TodaysPhoto.org
Image © 2008 Peder Fugl

Character Strengths & Virtue



Character Strengths & Virtue



wisdom

//creativity
//curiosity
//judgement
//love of learning
//perspective



courage

//bravery
//persistence
//honesty
//zest



humanity

//love
//kindness
//social intelligence



transcendence

//appreciation
of beauty
//gratitude
//hope
//humour
//spirituality



justice

//teamwork
//fairness
//leadership



moderation

//forgiveness
//modesty
//prudence
//self-control

Character Strengths & Virtue

Creativity Perspective
Judgment Curiosity
Honesty Bravery Fairness
HUMOR Zest
PERSEVERANCE Teamwork
Love Kindness Leadership
Social Intelligence Love of Learning
Forgiveness HOPE PRUDENCE
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence Humility
Spirituality SELF-REGULATION Gratitude
© www.VIACHARACTER.ORG VIA INSTITUTE ON CHARACTER

Character Strengths & Virtue



Gratitude



Self-Control



Hope



Where
hope grows,
miracles
blossom.

- Elva Rae

Love



The Importance of Relationships





Mindfulness & Meditation



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Truth



Concluding Thoughts





Dr Peggy Kern

Peggy.Kern@unimelb.edu.au

www.peggykern.org